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A

DESCANT

UPON

WEATHER-WISDOM.

By —————

LONDON

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.

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Peace, John

A DESCANT.

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* * * * * ‘ When the facts which are the groundwork of a science are obvious, and when the motive which urges men to the investigation of them is very powerful, we may always expect that such a science will be so quickly perfected in the most early times as to leave little for after ages to add.’*

I wont maintain that Sir James threw a furtive glance at the weather when he made that remark, but how reasonably may it be turned upon the subject by some such adaptation as this—‘ When we find that from the most early times men have felt themselves urged by powerful motives to investigate whatever facts might

* Vol. i. p. 121.

seem to acquaint them beforehand with the coming weather, and yet have not advanced one step in the science, we may safely conclude that it is no science at all for them, but an unknowable matter from which the sooner they withdraw their attention the better.*

Such a course however will hardly be followed by the natives of this grumbling island, who among the many privileges they enjoy seem to prize none more highly than that of perpetually scrutinizing and finding fault with the climate which it has pleased Providence to assign to it. I firmly believe that if that 'shifting of the poles askance' were righted, to which some say the variableness we repine at is owing, we should still grumble on at being deprived of the opportunity of showing how piously we can

* John Mills Esq. F.R.S. author of a luminous ESSAY ON THE WEATHER, is of opinion that men knew more about it formerly than they do now. The following are his own happy words — 'The ancients had certainly arrived at a more perfect knowledge of this article than we are possessed of.' ESSAY, 2nd Edit. p. 79.

THE Editor of the following Fragment begs leave to relate in few words the accident by which it came into his hands and his reason for publishing it.

He chanced last autumn to be walking across the sands in the bay of Oxwich when he picked up what seemed from its remaining bit of blue cover to be a boy's mutilated copy-book, but proved on examination to be a rambling treatise full of anti-popular (and therefore presumably *wrong*) opinions upon what is therein called 'weather-wisdom.' Things of little intrinsic value are often considered of great importance by the owner, and the Editor thinking this might be one of them went to some expense in trying to make known to the Author how he might recover his property. But either the notice never met his eye, or he did not care to acknowledge his bantling, or he did not think it worth the sum with which he must have reimbursed the finder if he had reclaimed it. If the last be

his opinion the Editor for once concurs with the Author, and yet prints the tract at length in the hope of reimbursing himself; for he is assured, by some who are better acquainted with the present taste for literature than he can pretend to be, that a book's being full of nonsense by no means militates against its selling remarkably well.

As the leaves of the MS. are numbered it would appear that only one is missing at the beginning, but how many have been lost at the end the Editor has no means of knowing. What he has printed by way of conclusion was found upon a loose scrap of paper in the same hand-writing as the rest, and as it had no connection with the pages between which it was placed it may suitably close an immethodical performance as

A POSTLIMINIARY DEDICATION.

contrive to turn a great grievance into a source of endless amusement.

But although it is we of this nation,

Rich in expedients for inquietude,

who are principally distinguished by fondness for descanting on the present weather and by indulging in vain speculations concerning what is to come, it is a practice which did not spring up with us, for there are few useless pursuits to which men have addicted themselves that can be traced to a remoter antiquity, or have met with a more constant condemnation.

From the First of Books we learn that the earliest times had their 'astrologers, stargazers, and monthly prognosticators,' and that they who were inclined to trust them were forewarned that these liars and diviners mad 'should be as stubble.' The augurial and tripudiary divinations among later and gentile nations, though they pointed to undertakings and events different from those to which our modern soothsayers apply theirs, often had reference to the coming

weather and involved predictions respecting it. A worthy Gloucestershire yeoman of my acquaintance, who reads Greek like a college tutor, tells me that in the *GEOPONICA* he observes the same anxiety about the weather, the same seeking for prognosticks concerning it and the same disappointment from relying upon them, which is displayed by those who give themselves up to this fruitless study in our own day.

In one of Lucian's dialogues we find Icaromenippus at Jupiter's whispering-place, pitying the ruler of the skies for the dilemma into which he is thrown by a couple of countrymen; one of them directing a petition to his right ear that not a drop of rain may fall till the harvest is over, while the other is *boring* his left for immediate showers to bring up a backward crop of cabbages. Cicero seems very much inclined to join in the laugh which he takes for granted a couple of augurs must have had whenever they met in private, and could freely talk over the credulity of the blockheads who believed in

them.* Tacitus (old Forsyth) remarks with his usual sagacity that these conjurers will go on blundering, and meeting with implicit believers, to the end of time ; and John Partridge, Francis Moore, and Poor Robin, have upheld the truth of his observation for the last century or two.† A few years ago however, when the antiquity of anything began to be considered a proof of its vileness, even these popular worthies

* That thought of Cicero's brings to mind a similar one entertained by Bp. Hall. Having given two examples of later deceptions, he subjoins—'Both these jugglers smile upon one another while they exhibit these reliques to their people ; and now even the silly vulgar begin (not without indignation) to descry their cozenage.' NO PEACE WITH ROME. Sec. xxi.

† One of these seers is immortalized in the Rape of the Lock so gracefully constellated ;—

This PARTRIDGE soon shall view in cloudless skies
When next he looks through Galileo's eyes ;
And hence th' egregious wizard shall foredoom
The fate of Louis and the fall of Rome.

Another of the craft owes some of his notoriety to a lantern tied to a boy's kite—

This Sidrophel by chance espy'd,
And with amazement staring wide,
Bless us, quoth he, what dreadful wonder
Is that appears in heaven yonder !

seemed falling into disrepute. Thinks I to myself we may pick up a crum of comfort from the insane love of mutability that now prevails, for who knows but in this exploding age *talking about the weather* may go out of fashion? not from a perception that the practice is abominably foolish and tiresome, but merely because it has lasted so long.

No such consequence followed the temporary deposition of the three ancients, for a weather-table was thereupon issued under the authority of three moderns, 'constructed upon philosophical considerations' and adapted to the advanced state of society. This lucid table, 'ascribed to the celebrated Dr. Herschel,' was said to be revised (oh fie! could it want revision?) by the learned Dr. Adam Clarke, and improved (worse and worse!) by the ingenious Dr. Kirwan. It was qualified with the conditional *ifs* and *buts* and had all the roundaboutation of its predecessors, but wanting their occasional boldness it proved 'caviare to the general.'

This pompous Doctorum Variorum production is now consigned to the end of the almanack, and placed close to the stamp and legacy duties; whereby is delicately hinted to such as put any faith in it that they would do well to set about arranging their worldly affairs before their understanding *quite* forsakes them.

In justice to the III Doctors it ought to be mentioned that there is no evidence of their having derived the slightest profit from their own table; and herein they did but imitate that renowned cabalist Christophorus Theophrastus Paracelsus Bumbastus, who having discovered the way to make a fairy, had the courage to abstain from using the receipt himself but left it behind him for the benefit of posterity.*

The declension of Herschel and his satellites

* Dog-eared almanacks may be allowed, but let a man beware of the consequence of doubling down the leaves of any other book;—‘I recollect at Dr. Farmer’s sale the leaf which preserved this receipt forcibly folded down by the learned commentator; *from which we must infer the credit he gave to the experiment.*’! CURIOS. OF LIT. 2nd Ser. vol. iii. p. 14.

gave room for the uprising of Mr. Murphy, whose splendid audacities will not be quickly forgotten. He was soon followed by a troop of imitators in town and country whom it would be wearisome to enumerate. One of them however, who enchained the attention of the inhabitants of a great city (not the first in the kingdom) for quarter of a winter, owes to his lucky stars a name that will save him from oblivion, for how can the catalogue of these gentry be wound up more worthily than with a PSHAW!

The amazing number of grammars manufactured for the purpose of teaching Englishmen English proves that there is no good one, or (perhaps) that none whatever is needed; the best way of acquiring a knowledge of our native language being to follow the example of Dan Homer and John Bunyan, who seem to have pickt up theirs without using any. Every old woman in the land has a receipt that will be sure to get rid of *your* cold, though not one of them can tell how to get rid of her

own. What inference can be drawn from the multitudinous remedies proffered for the cure of this disorder? Why, that none has been found out; for were it otherwise the memory of it would never have been lost. We may as safely infer the non-existence of any rules for discovering to-morrow's weather, from the vast variety that have been proposed for the purpose; the sagacity of myriads, age after age, could hardly have been exerted in vain if directed to any thing which we could reasonably hope by searching to find out.*

But in truth, not only nobody knows what weather is coming next, but nobody *believes* that he knows any such thing. I never met with any of these lunaticks so mad as to bet two to one that they could tell what it would be four and

* A sensible person may sometimes draw profitable conclusions from the *past* weather, but he will take special care not to found any upon what is to come. Dr. Buckland tells us that 'Mr. Dickinson, who supplies the paper for stamped letter-covers, wisely regulates his Spring contracts by the quantity of water in his Winter rain gauge.' ADDRESS AT SOUTHAMPTON, 27th July, 1844.

twenty hours after laying the wager. One who was esteemed a very successful follower of the occult science, was cured of his devotion to it by looking over a register which he had privately kept of the fate of his own predictions. He had set down some seven hundred, and upon casting up his account found that about 350 of these had been flatly contradicted, and about 350 had not. It was clear then that if he had in every case reversed his prediction he would have been right just as often, and that as happy a result might have been looked for from the mere doctrine of chances if he had avoided the trouble his calculations must have given him, and only said 'wet' and 'dry' alternately.

This consideration taught the honest chronicler a useful lesson upon the vanity of his favourite science, for he is not ashamed to declare that the year when he smashed his glass (the glasses the Teetotallers denounce are not more perfidious) and burnt his ledger, brought him sounder sleep at night and better spirits by day than he had

known during the seven which he devoted to that horrible registration.* Interpret the rise and fall of the mercury for a while just contrary to the usual way, and you will be amazed at the success of the plan. I once tried it myself for a whole season, and all the people in the parish took me for a conjurer, owing to the number of good hits that I made.†

* 'Let us cease to consider what may never happen, and what when it shall happen will laugh at human speculation.' This is very well said by Rasselas, and may move those who are more touched by prose than poetry. They who are of a different temperament will find the thought beautifully expanded in that passage of Comus which begins with

Peace brother ! be not over exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils.

† So many great discoveries have been found out by accident that it is possible I may have stumbled in a frolick upon the right way of construing the indications of the barometer. Tell me, Sir John Davis, how the Chinese manage the matter? They affirm that the needle points to the south, and as it has two ends probably one of them does. 'Tis to be hoped the rogues have anticipated me ; for it will be a most provoking circumstance if I who am penning a descant upon Weatherwisdom for the sake of exposing its hollowness should after all be 'cheated into fame' as the illustrious teacher of it !

But positively from our desperate sensitiveness we are become such barometrical machines ourselves as to want no manufactured ones. Hear what an amiable devotee says on the point; ‘Inured from our cradles to every vicissitude in a climate more various than any other, we are so well admonished of every change of the atmosphere by our bodily feelings as hardly to have any need of a weather-glass to mark them.’ Very true dear valetudinary! and yet there are more of these needless instruments to be met with in England (didst thou not consult one of them occasionally?) than can be found all the rest of the world over. Much rather would I be conditioned like thine own waggoner than endued with thy pneumatick sensibility—

The learned finger never need explore
His vigorous pulse; and the unhealthful East
That breathes the spleen, and searches every bone
Of the infirm, is wholesome air to him.

Yet hast thou made ample atonement for thy tender railing against thy native land in those other dutiful lines;—

Though thy clime
 Be fickle, and thy year, most part, deformed
 With dripping rains, or withered by a frost,
 I would not yet exchange thy sullen skies
 And fields without a flower, for warmer France
 With all her vines ; nor for Ausonia's groves
 Of golden fruitage, and her myrtle bowers.*

Another Delicate so constantly wrapt himself up within doors that he could only be brought to admit that our 'climate is delightful when framed and glazed.' To this habit of staying at home we may owe the great number of fasci-

* What is thus acquiesced in by one patriot-poet is shewn to be advantageous by another ;

'How erring oft the judgment in its hate
 Or fond desire ! Those slow-descending showers,
 Those hovering fogs, that bathe our growing vales
 In deep November (loathed by trifling Gaul
 Effeminate) are gifts the Pleiads shed,
 Britannia's handmaids. As the beverage falls
 Her hills rejoice, her valleys laugh and sing.'

DYER'S FLEECE. Book I.

The green of an English landscape is a colour unknown to the rest of Europe.

A great Poet who still lives (Heaven bless him in both worlds!) said to Mrs. Hemans in his own characteristic manner—'I would not part with the mists that *spiritualize* our mountains for all the clear skies of Italy.'

nating letters which he too has bequeathed us. Sprightly and elegant as they are, upon comparing the two collections we are tempted to exclaim (but that not always)

HORACE was decent, COWPER had a heart !

'Tis very pleasing during a great drought or long continued rain to hear it predicted that it will last for a month longer, the predictioners although fortified by the glass being generally confuted within a day or two.* I was once told (it was on the 9th of May) that April having been dry throughout we should be sure to have

* *Note by the Editor.* The author ought in fairness to have given Mr. John Mills's explanation of such seeming contradictions; 'When the quicksilver falls very low without any corresponding change in our island we may be sure there is a violent storm *at some distant place*, which accounts for a false prognostick often unjustly laid to the charge of the barometer.' *ESSAY*, p. 85.

This clears up those puzzling fluctuations of the glass which often take place during a long continuance of settled weather; and justifies the constant *rise* of the mercury from the 10th to the 16th of November last, though that happened to be the wettest week of the whole year.

no rain until September. At 5 o'clock next morning down it came in pail-fulls, such as that well-known ubiquitary 'the oldest person in the neighbourhood' could no where call to mind. The well-deserved praise awarded to the inquisitive Zadig may be given to our fond scrutineers of the weather with equal propriety; 'He then turned his attention to metaphysicks, and having studied the science for a long time with great assiduity, he became as thoroughly acquainted with it as the profoundest philosophers of the realm—which is as much as to say that he knew very little about the matter.'*

It is a great pity that the adventurers in this maddest of all possible subjects of speculation should not be made to suffer in their pockets, as even those wary persons sometimes do who restrict themselves to the more reasonable specu-

* Purloined from Butler—

'He knew what's what, and that's as high
As metaphysick wit can fly.'

lation in vogue.* Let but a sixpenny fine be levied by the Crown for every untrue prediction concerning the weather, and one of two consequences (both good) will be sure to follow;—either the number of false prophets in this island will be marvellously thinned, or long before that happy reign shall be over which I trust she is destined to enjoy, her Majesty will have it in her power to apply (what has never been asked for) an *honest* sponge to the national debt.

It has been said very prettily by Du Bartas,

‘ I’ll ne’er believe that the least flower that prances
 Our garden-borders, or the common banks,
 And the least stone that in her warming lap
 Our kind nurse Earth doth courteously wrap,
 Hath some peculiar virtue of its own,
 And that the glorious stars of heaven have none ;’

nor will I, excellent Du Bartas, but neither will

* It is painful to hear Railways traduced as though they had been of no real service to the nation. It is true that they threaten to unparadise England, but there is one undeniable benefit for which we are indebted to them—every now and then they prevent the weather from being the most detestable subject of common conversation.

I believe that our almanack makers and other Sidrophels and Whackums are the people to find out what that virtue is.* The general falsehood of their announcements is sufficiently proved by the universal wonderment which is felt whenever any thing they have pretended to foretel happens to come to pass. It stands alone like Seneca's supposed prediction of the discovery of America.

* A friend of mine who is a great book-worm tells me that he once saw a copy of Hudibras which had in it somewhere or other the following lines—

He made an instrument to know,
If the moon shine at full or no ;
That wou'd, as soon as e'er she shone, strait,
Whether 'twere day or night demonstrate.

He did invent the weather-glass,
Which tells you (when 'tis come to pass)
What any fool, as I'm a sinner,
May know by looking out o' the windore.

I thank my friend for his information, though a question with which it was accompanied is a little embarrassing ; 'After all (said he) why should *one ology* that infers a man's disposition from the configuration of the planets which took place at his birth, be more preposterous than *another ology* that pretends to find it out from the configuration of his noddle which was settled about the same time ?'

Astrology however, though somewhat less in fashion is not so absurd as moonology, the stars having long been noted for their stedfastness, while the ruling planet (the great Diana) of the moonologers is the very emblem of mutability, for she not only never wears the same face two nights following, but every month in the year changes herself altogether.* That ‘truth is not to be spoken at all times’ is a vile maxim, and it would be a shame to insinuate that our professors worship one luminary only; for whoever has an opportunity of observing how they prosecute their studies will find that they contrive to draw inspiration from another, and that the MOON only shares their devotions with the WEATHERCOCK !

‘ Though how the wind comes, and whither he goes,
There’s never a scholar in England knows.’

* John Mills Esq. F.R.S. albeit of a very prognostical turn of mind himself, cannot refrain from applying a little lunar caustic to his half-brethren the moonites.—‘When an opinion once obtains that a change of the weather happens at certain times, the change is expected, and as often as it

But the truth is, as to the point in question, (and a hundred more quite out of the question) our lot is fallen to us in the best of all FORTUNATE ISLANDS. The merry monarch 'who never said a foolish thing,' said a very wise one when he pronounced the climate of England the most enviable in Europe, because no other affords so many days in the year, and so many hours in the day, that can be agreeably spent in the open air. His constant cheerfulness may partly be ascribed to his having held this opinion, and they who adopt it will find their own stock speedily augmented. If we think of his vices let us consider how long (but reluctantly) he tarried in France, and whether their despicable *fondness* for dwelling there now tends to make our present countrymen a jot better?

Oh fruitful Britain! thou wert doubtless meant
The nurse of fools to stock the continent.

takes place the remembrance of it remains; but we soon forget the number of times it fails, unless the mind is assisted by a faithful journal.' ESSAY ON THE WEATHER, p. 42.

Some phrases have been so happily coined as to defy translation altogether; and some there are which can be rendered but into one language more. *Nulla dies sine linea* can only be done into English; it means ‘a fig for the weather! take a long walk every day.’ Any one who has not directed his attention to the subject will be surprized to find how seldom it rains at any given hour of the twenty-four; thus, if he should not have the whole of the day at his command, he may yet fix upon some one part of it for statedly obeying the excellent injunction just translated, and rarely suffer more than trifling inconvenience from so doing.

It happens to be in my power to offer such a remarkable attestation in support of this position, that I do not feel at liberty to withhold it. From leading a too indolent life (politely called sedentary) I was formerly a victim to torturing headache.* One morning my good Genius inspired

* Not a martyr, for that would imply such a *willing* endurance of pain as very few of us are chargeable with.

me with a resolution to establish a practice of walking before breakfast. A single month's adherence to the plan was attended with benefit; I followed it for three, and my headache was gone. I now began to like the practice and discovered one day that I had pursued it for a twelvemonth.

That monster Custom, who all sense doth eat
Of habits evil, is angel yet in this,
That to the use of what is fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery,
Which aptly is put on.

This frock or livery did I put on every morning for sixteen years without a single interruption, and no more thought of plaguing the barometer with the usual questions, than of asking the thermometer to tell me if I was warm enough. I have no record to produce of the weather during that long period, for I never meditated such persistency as I was permitted to accomplish, but many a day have I looked back with surprise at the remoteness of my last uncomfortable

morning, and King Charles's remark meets with a grateful response in my breast.

Many worthy men who pay undue attention to atmospherick changes, become querulous and unconfiding in a degree of which they themselves are by no means so thoroughly aware as those who have the discomfort of listening to their wailings. 'Twere well if they would ponder a remark of good Bishop Hall's; 'The wise providence of God hath so contrived his earth, and us, that he hath fitted our bodies to our clime, and the native sustenance of the place unto our bodies.'* When we consider the Sender what can be more unpleasing to a rightly attuned ear than the phrase 'bad weather?' Yet it is continually let fall from lips that are never opened irreverently upon other subjects. Bad weather! Who will say there has been any since the flood? who will dare to say there was any then? I have known the words innocently coupled

* QUO VADIS. Sec. vi.

together in only one instance; when a man complaining of the frequent falsifications of his instrument, was answered by the Italian from whom he had bought it—‘Indeed Signior, to tell you the truth, it has been very bad weather for the glass lately.’*

It is commonly said that the farmers are a race of people never satisfied with the weather, but my experience tells me that as ready an acquiescence and contentment with what comes is felt by them as by other classes, and that they appreciate a boon more correctly and with more fervour.† I met with a proof of this one day that for a moment ruffled my philosophy. I was walking over B—— Down (after breakfast) without cloak or umbrella, but equipt in a new

* Perhaps my readers (should I ever plane these rough thoughts smooth, and ask for any) will think the phrase may be lawfully applied to one other occasion—when ten tempestuous days keeping me within doors somewhat more than usual, and the few books in my carpet-bag being run through, I employed myself in cooking up this gallimaufry?

† ‘My prayer goes with the hushandman’s; I desire every thing in its proper season.’ SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

hat, when a pelting storm, more longed for than expected, overtook me. The rustic who held open the gate of the farm house to which I was going, said to me as I passed through 'a nice drop of rain Sir!' This, to a man wet to the skin, and with a new hat flopping over his shoulders like an old oilcase, did seem a rather inopportune expression of gratitude. But the clown was right, for he thought of the general good while I was absorbed by the particular inconvenience. Perhaps the only reflection which that day's rain brought to a thousand people in the town where my hatter lives was this—that it made the streets very dirty and kept a number of ladies at home who ought to be out shopping.

It must be confessed that repinings in the country, when they occur, appear more offensive than in town, where there is so much to take off attention from that divine hand which one would think can never be unperceived amid natural scenes. Just as the follies of the bibliomaniac are more sickening than those of unbookish men,

because he is supposed to be so much better acquainted than they are with the lore that ought to make him wiser.

There are nervous folks as they are called (being utterly nerveless) who hearing a rap at the door, exclaim ‘Bless us! who can that possibly be?’ and are in a perfect fidget till the stupid, sleepy, lazy, loitering servant (knowing their impatience) hurries in quite breathless to inform them. And some who upon receiving a letter with a strange postmark twirl it about in a pet, because until the wax renders up its trust they are unable to guess who in the world it comes from. All these sensitives, as well as the sad expectants of that wretched weather which they may never see, should call to mind Dr. Johnson’s reply when he was told that an unpromising man who was introduced to him would improve as the evening advanced—‘Sir I can wait.’

They who have no real evils to complain of know how to make fictitious ones answer their

purpose ; and the grumblers at the lack of sunshine or rain are the first to discover, the moment it is granted, a number of ways in which it may possibly do mischief. This perverse ingenuity is sufficiently annoying, but it is still more so to hear some of those querulous persons laud a fine day which they have chosen to take under their patronage. Forgetful (how I love the delicate-hearted creature who first had the courage to say so!) that ‘comparisons are odious,’ they lug in their praise of to-day by disparaging yesterday, and bestow their stingy suffrage as if they were paying a compliment, or performing some act of benevolence. This graciousness reminds one of the exceedingly well-bred and considerate people who having no need to go to church on their own account, go there merely for the sake of setting a good example to others, or out of civility to the parson.

If a batch of our misery-manufacturers should do anything else worthy of transportation, let us hope the judge will not be so merciless as to

send them to Australia; for there, being debarred from their old topic of consolation, the weight of the punishment designed by the law would be doubled by the insufferable serenity of the climate.

So many knowable and pleasant subjects lie in our path that we may well renounce the perplexing and fruitless study of those that are hid from our eyes ;

Into the future times why should we pry,
And seek to antedate our misery ?

We are at any rate bound to leave over-solicitude about the weather, to ‘such of our brethren as have the misfortune to dissent from the Church of England.’* The church never makes use of the word, except in a special collect which she

* That mild and compassionate phrase occurs in one of Queen Anne’s first speeches to parliament. Her Majesty had just before used language signally judicious in replying to an address from the Bishops and Clergy—‘I hope your concurrence in this very dutiful address is a good presage of your union in all other matters; which is very desirable for my service and the welfare of the church.’ KENNETT ON IMPROPRIATIONS. p. 350.

reserves for extraordinary occasions when we may have been visited with a plague of rain and waters. In general the supplication in the litany, that in due time we may enjoy the fruits of the earth, is quite sufficient, as it involves a prayer for seasonable weather without which they could not be brought forth.*

How dreadful would be incertitude with respect to the ebb and flow of that tide which daily lashes and recedes from our shores! Still more calamitous might be ignorance concerning the return of the seasons; and they follow one another in perpetual round, making through earth grateful vicissitude. Exact and daily information of what weather may be at hand, is not required, and the Father of the rain and Begetter of the drops of dew hath not imparted it; the subject is one whereon

Heaven from all creatures hides the book of fate,
All but the page prescribed, *its present state*.

* Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice.

And in this, as in other instances, we have as much knowledge as we need though not so much as we covet; for no one will contend that the world at large or even his own particular community has suffered calamity for want of more. They who cherish 'the sunshine of the breast' will find plenty out of doors, but the peevish and importunate can never be satisfied;* let them pretend what they may they have a constant eye to their own personal convenience, and we may easily imagine the confusion that would ensue if their selfish and contrarious prayers were complied with for a single day.†

But after all, what a downright blessing is the uncertainty of the weather in this dear England of ours! When it is fine it is at liberty to go on as long as it pleases, and when it is dull no mortal can tell how soon it may clear up again. Thus there is always room left for Hope at the bottom of the most hypochondriacal bucket. For

* 'Be thine own palace, or the world's thy gaol.'

† See page 4.

my own part I bear all the incommodities of the climate quite joyfully when I reflect that I should not be able to call Shakspeare and Milton my countrymen had I been born in any other.

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Even mariner's predictions are worth no more than other men's, when uttered upon shore. Only yesterday (the 20th of October), as I was looking through a window at O—— Rectory, a gentle Lady who chances to be staying there drew my attention to the frustum of a rainbow, called 'a weather-dog' in Cornwall, and by the fishermen here 'a bar.' She told me she had just learnt from the boatmen that it denoted the sure continuance of those storms which had already prevailed nearly a fortnight. To-day (Shade of NELSON! was it

reverential thought of THEE that stilled old Ocean?) has been one of the most delectable and serene that I can call to mind. Full early


Like stars in heaven,
With ships the sea was sprinkled far and nigh,

that had gladly forsaken their sheltering bays and were steadily pursuing their course, undeterred by last night's dreadful *bar*. Is either of the little party (we were but three) who paced the down this morning likely to forget the entrancement of the scene which it presented? No! nor the increase of delight that awaited us when we had descended the cliff,

Not unpartaking help from Poet's staff,

and entered upon that matchless walk round the Point, where one would feel shocked at the wickedness of wishing to see anything more beautiful. If I resume and finish these cogitations they shall be inscribed to my benign Intelligencer of yesterday, in return for the alacrity with which she

renounced all confidence in delusive prognosticks and adopted my favourite canon—THAT THERE IS NO SURE WAY OF KNOWING WHAT TO-MORROW'S WEATHER WILL BE, EXCEPT BY WAITING TILL TO-MORROW COMES.



W. William Wordsworth Esq.

with profound respect.

A

DESCANT

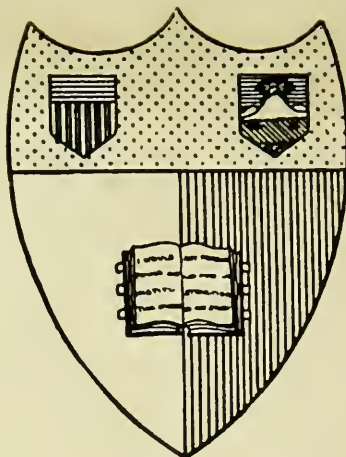
UPON

WEATHER-WISDOM.

A FRAGMENT.

"ROUND THESE, WITH TENDRILS STRONG AS FLESH
AND BLOOD, OUR PASTIME AND OUR HAPPINESS
WILL GROW."

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